West Bridgewater Public Library

CENTENARY

SEPTEMBER 28, 1980

2:00 - 4:00 P.M.

Trustees

Carollee Ferris, Chairman
Barbara Perkins, Secretary
Patricia Cronin
Wayne Legge
Helen Millet
Joan Sheedy

PROGRAM

TEA AND GUEST BOOK — Friends of the Library

EXHIBIT OF MEMORABILIA
OF THE LIBRARY — Arranged by Jane P. Ouderkirk

BIRTHDAY CAKE

ACCEPTANCE OF THE FOYE
MEMORIAL GIFT — 3:00 P.M. — Carollee Ferris

The Library Staff

JANE P. OUDERKIRK, M.L.S.
Director

MARILYN RALEIGH — RITA GIOVANONI
KATHLEEN FENSTERMAKER — NANCY BELL
CHARLES KEELER, *Custodian*

HISTORY OF THE
WEST BRIDGEWATER PUBLIC LIBRARY

In December of 1878, Francis E. Howard, a prominent West Bridgewater Citizen, offered the sum of five hundred dollars toward the development of a Public Library with the condition that an equal sum be raised from other residents of the community. Mr. Howard's proposition was accepted with enthusiasm at the March 1879 Town Meeting, and the additional sum of money was quickly raised through subscription, donation, and "entertainment."

Those gathered at the Town Meeting also established a Board of Directors (Trustees) to oversee the founding and development of the new Public Library. It was decided that "the Board should be composed of an equal number of Ladies and Gentlemen."

The site selected for the Library was a rented room in what was then the Post Office. After renovation of the room, acquisition of a collection of books (through purchase and donation), the Library opened for business on the last Saturday in October, 1879. Miss Mary Perkins was employed as West Bridgewater's first librarian, a position she held for the following thirty years.

In November of 1881, the Library was moved from its overcrowded room in the Post Office to larger quarters in the Howard Seminary Building. By 1899, the twenty year old Library had grown from a collection of 871 books to a total of 5,124 volumes. Once again overcrowded conditions forced the Trustees to find a new location for the Public Library.

In 1908, the Library was moved from the Howard Seminary to the former Center Primary School. For the first time, the Library occupied its own building. The new location was considered a great improvement, with more space, better lighting and open bookcases which allowed patrons to browse.

In 1913, the Library opened its first and only "Branch" in the home of Mrs. Prescott Snell to serve residents in the North Elm Street area.

Library use grew slowly until the Depression, when circulation of books soared. During those years of economic hardship, there was a great demand for a larger Library and for more books.

The popularity of the Library continued to grow through the late Thirties. During the Forties, the focus of the Trustees changed. The years during World War II were hectic ones, and the Trustees took on the added responsibility of collecting books for distribution to American Servicemen stationed in Europe.

In 1956, a committee was appointed by Special Town Meeting to "survey Library facilities," because once again the use of the Library was hampered by its physical limitations.

The Town Meeting of November, 1960 voted the sum of $50,000 for the purpose of constructing and equipping a new Public Library. Construction began in 1961, and the present Library building opened its doors in September, 1962. The old Library building (the Center Primary School) was sold and moved to the corner of South Main Street and Ash to house a business.

Our Library is now one of the busiest small Libraries in the State. Book circulation is approaching 50,000 and more than 3,000 local citizens hold Library cards. Over the past hundred years Mr. Howard's proposition has become an integral part of West Bridgewater. All of us who value our Public Library must foster its continued growth.

(Historical information edited from papers of Hazel Snow Fletcher and Wilbur Parrott, past Librarians).

LIBRARIANS

Mary Perkins	1879 - 1909
Hattie E. Cary	1909 - 1922
Alice A. Goddin	1922 - 1924
Charlotte Williams	1924 - 1941
Jean M. Murdock	1941 - 1958
Hazel Fletcher	1958 - 1970
Christine Dowd	1970 - 1973
Wilbur L. Parrott	1973 - 1974
Jane Ouderkirk	1974 -